

Madison Historical Highlights History of SIUE

by Megan Wieser
April 21 2021 2:11 PM



EDWARDSVILLE – A recently discovered collection of oral histories about Southern Illinois University Edwardsville’s history is now available online thanks to the work of Madison Historical: The Online Encyclopedia and Digital Archive for Madison County, Illinois, a digital history project run by SIUE’s History Department.

In 2019, Madison Historical acquired a collection of 79 oral history interviews conducted by SIUE’s Ellen Nore, PhD, professor emeritus of history. The interviews

were conducted from 2005-07 as part of Nore's research into the university's 50th Anniversary.

The collection includes interviews from former department chairs, an assortment of support staff, former students, as well as two former University chancellors David Werner and Vaughn Vandergrift, and Assistant Provost Rudolph G. Wilson, one of the first Black faculty members at SIUE.

The interviews cover such milestones in SIUE history as the creation of the "One University" system, the construction of Edwardsville campus buildings, the establishment of new departments, University outreach, a broad assortment of collegiate memories, and the tempestuous relationship SIUE has had at times with diversity and inclusion.

Madison Historical staff have digitized the original tapes, and transcribed, audited and published them on madison-historical.siue.edu.

Highlights include:

Earleen Patterson discusses early attempts at diversity and inclusion programs and the role of support services related to the SIUE student body. According to doctoral student Shannan Mason, "Patterson's story is poignant in that she takes this initiative and drive to make a positive change in the world seriously, working not only to affect the lives of our students, but also working to impact the community as a whole."

Sheila Ruth's interview recounts the origins of women's studies at SIUE. Ruth helped inaugurate the first classes offered on women's studies and blended them with religion, combining two seemingly different subject matters into one. "Ruth's story is empowering," said research assistant and undergraduate Hayley Goebel. "It shows that despite all odds, anyone can learn and bring change."

An interview with Patrick Riddleberger demonstrates how faculty protested the Vietnam War. According to research assistant and master's student Tyler Young, "Riddleberger not only led one of the Edwardsville anti-war organizations, but also sent a letter protesting President Johnson's rhetoric and decisions that were included in the Congressional Record."

Currently, 28 interviews are published on the Madison Historical website with more slated to be published in the future. The collection is titled: 50th Anniversary of SIUE Oral History Collection.

The project is generously funded by the SIUE Provost's Office, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities Program at SIUE.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville provides students with a high-quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River's rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of nearly 13,000.